AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1-4.   (Cancelled)

5.   (Previously presented) A method for use in a sales transaction, comprising:

determining, via a controller, a measure of flexibility based on a product description;

determining a sale price based on the product description; and

selecting a product to be sold for the sale price,

wherein the sale price of the selected product is a first price if the product description is a first product description and a second price if the product description is a second product description;

wherein the sale price is based on the measure of flexibility; and

wherein the step of determining the measure of flexibility comprises:

determining a number of flexibility points for each condition value in the product description; and

summing the determined flexibility points.

6.   (Original) A method according to Claim 5, wherein the number of flexibility points determined for a condition value is determined based on retailer data.

7-28.   (Cancelled)

29.   (Previously presented) Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the process steps comprising:

a determining step to determine a sale price based on a product description; and

a selecting step to select a product to be sold for the sale price,

wherein the sale price of the selected product is a first price if the product description is a first product description and a second price if the product description is a second product description;

2

wherein the determining step comprises determining a measure of flexibility based on the product description and determining the sale price based on the measure of flexibility; and

wherein determining the measure of flexibility comprises determining a number of flexibility points for each condition value in the product description and summing the determined flexibility points.

30.   (Cancelled)

31.   (Original) Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the process steps comprising:

a determining step to determine a sale price based on a product description;

a receiving step to receive from a customer an agreement to purchase a product for the sale price; and

after the receiving step, a selecting step to select a particular product to be sold to the customer from among a plurality of different products conforming to the product description.

32.   (Previously presented) Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the process steps comprising:

a receiving step to receive a product description from a customer, the product description including condition values describing a product desired by a customer;

a determining step to determine a sale price based on the received product description;

a transmitting step to transmit the sale price to the customer;

a receiving step to receive from the customer, prior to revealing the identity of a specific product to the customer, an agreement to purchase a product conforming to the product description for the sale price;

a selecting step to select a specific product conforming to the product description; and

a transmitting step to transmit redemption information to the customer and to reveal the identity of the specific product to the customer.

33.   (Original) Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the process steps comprising:

a receiving step to receive a description of a desired air travel itinerary;

a determining step to determine a sale price based on the description;

a receiving step to receive an agreement from a customer to purchase an airline ticket for the sale price; and

after receiving the agreement, a selecting step to select a flight on which the airline ticket will allow the customer to travel.

34.   (Previously presented) Computer-executable process steps encoded in a computer-readable signal, the process steps comprising:

a determining step to determine a sale price based on a product description; and

a selecting step to select a product to be sold for the sale price,

wherein the sale price of the selected product is a first price if the product description is a first product description and a second price if the product description is a second product description;

wherein the determining step comprises determining a measure of flexibility based on the product description and determining the sale price based on the measure of flexibility; and

wherein determining the measure of flexibility comprises determining a number of flexibility points for each condition value in the product description and summing the determined flexibility points.

35.   (Cancelled)

36.   (Original) Computer-executable process steps encoded in a computer-readable signal, the process steps comprising:

a determining step to determine a sale price based on a product description;

a receiving step to receive from a customer an agreement to purchase a product for the sale price; and

after the receiving step, a selecting step to select a particular product to be sold to the customer from among a plurality of different products conforming to the product description.

37.   (Previously presented) Computer-executable process steps encoded in a computer-readable signal, the process steps comprising:

a receiving step to receive a product description from a customer, the product description including condition values describing a product desired by a customer;

a determining step to determine a sale price based on the received product description;

a transmitting step to transmit the sale price to the customer;

a receiving step to receive from the customer, prior to revealing the identity of a specific product to the customer, an agreement to purchase a product conforming to the product description for the sale price;

a selecting step to select a specific product conforming to the product description; and

a transmitting step to transmit redemption information to the customer and to reveal the identity of the specific product to the customer.

38.   (Original) Computer-executable process steps encoded in a computer-readable signal, the process steps comprising:

a receiving step to receive a description of a desired air travel itinerary;

a determining step to determine a sale price based on the description;

a receiving step to receive an agreement from a customer to purchase an airline ticket for the sale price; and

after receiving the agreement, a selecting step to select a flight on which the airline ticket will allow the customer to travel.

39.   (Original) An apparatus comprising:

a processor; and

a memory in communication with the processor and storing processor-executable process steps;

wherein the processor is operative with the processor-executable process steps stored in the memory to:

i) receive a product description from a customer, the product description including condition values describing a product desired by a customer;

ii) determine a sale price based on the received product description;

iii) transmit the sale price to the customer;

iv) receive from the customer an agreement to purchase a product conforming to the product description for the sale price;

v) select a specific product conforming to the product description; and

vi) transmit redemption information to the customer, the redemption information identifying the specific product, wherein the customer is not guaranteed what specific product will be purchased before the agreement is received.

40.   (Original) An apparatus comprising:

a processor; and

a memory in communication with the processor and storing processor-executable process steps;

wherein the processor is operative with the processor-executable process steps stored in the memory to:

i) receive a description of a desired air travel itinerary;

ii) determine a sale price based on the description;

iii) a receiving step to receive an agreement from a customer to purchase an airline ticket for the sale price; and

iv) after receiving the agreement, a selecting step to select a flight on which the airline ticket will allow the customer to travel.

41.   (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:

means for establishing a sale price based on a product description; and

means for identifying a product to be sold for the sale price,

wherein the sale price of the selected product is a first price if the product description is a first product description and a second price if the product description is a second product description;

wherein the means for establishing the sale price includes means for determining a measure of flexibility based on the product description and determining the sale price based on the measure of flexibility; and

wherein the means for determining the measure of flexibility includes means for determining a number of flexibility points for each condition value in the product description and summing the determined flexibility points.

42.   (Cancelled)

43.   (Original) An apparatus comprising:

means for establishing a sale price based on a product description;

means for obtaining from a customer an agreement to purchase a product for the sale price; and

means for identifying a particular product to be sold to the customer from among a plurality of different products conforming to the product description after obtaining the agreement.

44.   (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:

means for obtaining a product description from a customer, the product description including condition values describing a product desired by a customer;

means for establishing a sale price based on the received product description;

means for delivering the sale price to the customer;

means for obtaining from the customer, prior to revealing the identity of a specific product to the customer, an agreement to purchase a product conforming to the product description for the sale price;

means for identifying a specific product conforming to the product description; and

means for delivering redemption information to the customer and to reveal the

identity of the specific product to the customer.

45.   (Original) An apparatus comprising:

        means for obtaining a description of a desired air travel itinerary;

        means for establishing a sale price based on the description;

        means for obtaining an agreement from a customer to purchase an airline ticket

for the sale price; and

        means for identifying a flight on which the airline ticket will allow the customer

to travel after obtaining the agreement.

46.   (Previously presented) Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-

readable medium, the process steps comprising:

        a receiving step to receive a product description from a customer, the product

description being descriptive of two or more products from a plurality of available

products;

        a determining step to determine, based on the product description, a single sales

price applicable to each of the two or more products from the plurality of available

products;

        a transmitting step to transmit, to the customer, an offer to buy an undisclosed one

of the two or more products for the single sale price; and

        a selling step to sell the undisclosed one of the two or more products to the

customer for the single sales price and to reveal the identity of the undisclosed one of the

two or more products to the customer.

47.   (Previously presented) A method, comprising:

        receiving a product description from a customer, the product description being

descriptive of two or more products from a plurality of available products;

        determining, by a controller, and based on the product description, a single sales

price applicable to each of the two or more products from the plurality of available

products;

transmitting, to the customer, an offer to buy an undisclosed one of the two or more products for the single sale price; and

selling the undisclosed one of the two or more products to the customer for the single sales price and to reveal the identity of the undisclosed one of the two or more products to the customer.

48.   (Previously presented) An apparatus, comprising:

means for receiving a product description from a customer, the product description being descriptive of two or more products from a plurality of available products;

means for determining, based on the product description, a single sales price applicable to each of the two or more products from the plurality of available products;

means for transmitting, to the customer, an offer to buy an undisclosed one of the two or more products for the single sale price; and

means for selling the undisclosed one of the two or more products to the customer for the single sales price and to reveal the identity of the undisclosed one of the two or more products to the customer.

49.   (Previously presented) A method, comprising:

receiving a first product description from a first customer, the first product description being descriptive of a product from a plurality of available products;

receiving a second product description from a second customer, the second product description being descriptive of the product from the plurality of available products;

determining, based on the first product description, a first sales price for the product from the plurality of available products;

determining, based on the second product description, a second sales price for the product from the plurality of available products;

providing the first sales price to the first customer;

providing the second sales price to the second customer; and

selling the product from the plurality of available products by at least one of:

9

(i) selling the product from the plurality of available products to the first customer for the first sales price; and

(ii) selling the product from the plurality of available products to the second customer for the second sales price.

50.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the first and second sales prices are the same.

51.   (New) A method, comprising:

determining transaction information associated with (i) a buyer who has arranged to purchase a product from a central controller at a first price established between the buyer and the central controller and (ii) a merchant that offers the product for sale at a second price, different from the first price, without offering the product for sale to buyers at the first price;

transmitting information that facilitates the acquisition of the product, by the buyer, from the merchant, in exchange for payment provided by the buyer, to the central controller, of an amount based on the first price; and

providing an amount based on the second price to the merchant.

52.   (New) The method of claim 51, further comprising:

arranging for the buyer to purchase the product at the first price.

53.   (New) The method of claim 51, wherein a third party provides, to the central controller, payment of an amount based on the difference between the first price and the second price.

54.   (New) The method of claim 51, wherein the determining comprises receiving transaction information from the merchant, and wherein the transmitting comprises transmitting information to the merchant.

55.   (New) A method, comprising:

receiving, from a buyer, an indication of a selection of a product from a Web site;

determining a first price for the selected product, wherein a merchant offers the selected product for sale at a second price different from the first price;

receiving, via a point-of-sale terminal, a credit card number associated with the buyer;

determining whether the credit card number is associated with the product;

arranging for the buyer to provide (i) the first price for the product if the credit card number is associated with the product, and (ii) the second price for the product if the credit card number is not associated with the product; and

transmitting information that facilitates the acquisition of the product, by the buyer, from the merchant.

56.   (New) A method, comprising:

establishing, between the buyer and a purchasing system, a first price for a product;

arranging for the buyer to take possession of the product at a retailer, the retailer being a different entity from the purchasing system, wherein the retailer offers, to buyers that do not establish the first price with the purchasing system, the product for sale at a second price that is different than the first price; and

transmitting, to the retailer, verification information facilitates authorization, by the retailer, of the buyer to take possession of the product, wherein the buyer provides a payment, based on the first price, to the purchasing system in exchange for the right to take possession of the product at the retailer.

57.   (New) The method of claim 56, wherein the first price is based on the second price.

58.   (New) The method of claim 56, wherein the first price is not entirely a function of the second price.

59.   (New) The method of claim 56, wherein the transmitting verification information comprises:

transmitting a one way hash function facilitating a determination by the retailer, using the one way hash function, of whether redemption information possessed by the buyer authorizes the buyer to take possession of the product.

60.   (New) The method of claim 56, wherein the transmitting of the verification information comprises:

receiving, from the retailer, information indicative of an attempt, by the buyer, to take possession of the product; and

transmitting, to the retailer, verification information authorizing the buyer to take possession of the product.

61.   (New) The method of claim 56, wherein the transmitting of the verification information comprises:

transmitting, to the retailer, the verification information that authorizes a plurality of buyers to take possession of a plurality of products.

62.   (New) The method of claim 56, further comprising:

arranging for the retailer to receive payment from a party other than the buyer in exchange for providing the product to the buyer.

63.   (New) The method of claim 62, wherein the payment received by the retailer is based on the second price.